DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 439 315 CG 029 882

AUTHOR Yang, Julia
TITLE Technology and Cultural Change: Implications in Counseling Taiwan Chinese Families.
PUB DATE 1997-05-00
NOTE 8p.; In: Caring in an Age of Technology. Proceedings of the International Conference on Counseling in the 21st Century (6th, Beijing, China, May 29-30, 1997); see CG 029 879.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Change Agents; Counseling; Cultural Influences; Family Influence; Foreign Countries; Interpersonal Communication; Social Values; Technology; *Values Clarification
IDENTIFIERS Information Society; Taiwan; Technological Change

ABSTRACT

Technological modifications to people's set of values in terms of work, education and family are reexamined and redefined in this paper. The paper recommends that the technological impact on families needs to be studied in a context of cultural change. It examines technology's impact on Taiwan Chinese families in the contexts of cultural transition and human relationships. Findings suggest that technological advances can bring enhanced communication and quality of life to families, but that technology can become problematic when the users confuse means with the ends. Counselors who are aware of both the promises and limitations of technology can develop better insights and strategies for dealing with families who are experiencing change due to cultural transition and technological advances. Counselors can facilitate the retaining of the best of family beliefs, as well as reconstruction of ethics and rearrangement of family relationships. It concludes that the social constructivist approach in counseling appears appropriate for working with Taiwan Chinese families. (JDM)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Technology and Cultural Change: Implications in Counseling Taiwan Chinese Families

Julia Yang, Ph.D., Chair
Department of Counseling and Guidance
National Kaohsiung Normal University

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
W. EVRAIFF
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED 439 315

Rationale

Taiwan, like other developed countries, has been well served in its technological advances. The benefits of health, mobility, material comforts, and the overcoming of the physical problems of communication are well enjoyed by most Taiwan Chinese families. Along with the prevalence of technology in our everyday life is the change of attitudes, activities, as well as processes and products of our survival and adjustment (Yu, 1988). With the technological modifications, our sets of values in the world of work, education, business, human relationships and famil, as well as personal life styles are reexamined and redefined. Impacts of technological changes on families, thus, need to be examined in a context of cultural change. The following examines impacts of technology on Taiwan Chinese families in the contexts of cultural transition as well as human relationships. Implications in counseling are also provided. As empirical data of the prevalence of technology in Taiwan Chinese families is extremely scarce, the following discussion is partially drawn from interviews with two Taiwan Chinese scholars. L.S. Lee, Chair, Department of Industrial Technology Education, National Taiwan Normal University, and K. H. Tsen, Chair, Department of Industrial Technology Education, National Kaohsiung Normal University.

Modernization: Families in Context

In the past two decades, Taiwan has undergone much societal changes

CG029882

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

responding to so called modernization. Modernization is a process in which a society matures. Often referred to as westernization, modernization denotes the phenomenon of rapid changes with internalized influences from the west such as individualistic world view, democracy, capitalism and mostly technology (Li, 1994). One must avoid, however, the simplicity to equate western cultural values or technological advances to social progress (King, 1991). Li (1994) contended that the convergence theory was not successful predicting that modern industrial economy would mold the future development of non-Western families into the patterns of western families. In a society like Taiwan which has moved rapidly from the premodern (agricultural) to modern (industrial) and now to post modern era within the last two decades, people are bound to experience transitions between and the co-presence of the new and the old, the industrial and the traditional, the westernized and the indigenous (Yang, 1991; Stickel and Yang, 1993).

The philosophy of Confucianism, transitions from agriculture, industrial to post industrial society, and the strong family tie and kinship are three core influencing aspects of Taiwan Chinese culture (Miller, Yang, and Chen, 1997). A few family sociologists tended to agree that Confucianist values of hard work and familial/societal role structure persist to have impacts on Chinese families in spite of western cultural influences (Mei, 1994; Lin, 1994; & Marsh, & Hsu, 1994). Social progress and modernity, however, inevitably result in altering social and relational structures as well as necessitating a new value system of social adjustment and integration. For example, emergence of neo-confucianism supporting pursuing knowledge and science has become an important factor contributing to rapid economic growth in some Asian countries (King, 1991; Sung, 1983).

Economic productivity of Taiwan Chinese is partially attributed to accessibility and availability of technology at home and at work (Sung, 1983). Fundamental changes can be found in every aspect of life inside and outside of the home. Families as the corner stone of Taiwan Chinese social interdependence are being restructured in their living arrangements and their financial, physical and psychological support functions (Li, 1994). Among the common characteristics of modern Taiwan Chinese families are urbanization, low birth rates, higher divorce rates, changing gender roles, changing family relationships and family structure, etc. These indicators of family instabilities are sometimes associated with socioeconomic development in a time of cultural change.

For Better or Worse: Technological Advances and Consequences

Although statistical data is scarce, several categories of technology, required or optional, are prevailing both in city and tural Taiwan Chinese family living. They are audiovisual systems, home computer system, home electronically appliances, home security alarm system and transportation vehicles such as motorcycles and automobiles, just to name a few. According to the 1994 study by C.T. Foundation, most Taiwan Chinese families owned at least one TV set (40%), two (31%), or more than two (22%). Electronic devices are also widely used in public/home entertainment and recreation. On average, there is a flight taking off every five minutes carrying passengers between the two largest cities of Taiwan. Overall, technological advances bring overall enhanced communication and quality of living in the families.

Technology can become problematic when the users would confuse means with the ends. Most concerns shared among educators are how TV watching and the

4 BEST COPY AVAILABLE

unmonitored cable TV programs may model passive, violent, premature sexual intimacy, and other risk taking behaviors in children and adolescents. The public concern has directed it attention to the easy access to inappropriate electronic information give and take without sufficient supervision. The massive time adolescents and adults spent on computer games, internet and e-mail systems can decrease or even replace time spent on out door activities or human interactions. Among the most extremes is the teenagers' notorious motorcycle riding all over the major cities in Taiwan on the weekends and school breaks that killed and hurt many innocents in the past decade (Yang, 1996). Sadly speaking, the largest cash deal business in Taiwan was once illegal prostitution of school aged young females disguised and managed by high tech communication devices (Yu, 1996).

Problem of technology in Taiwan has long surfaced with environmental concerns. Most Taiwan Chinese face environmental consequences of urbanization and technological development: traffic hassles and accidents, pollution in the air and water, high noise level etc. Mixture of residence and business districts have resulted in numerous deadly fires of public buildings. After the lifting of martial law in 1987, abusive earth digging has caused numerous flooding. Secondary consequences of lack of environmental conservation are public health and psychological fears and anxiety of public safety.

Technology and Family Relationships

Marsh and Hsu (1994) found that kinship ties of Taiwan Chinese are not absent during social modernization and that levels sociability with extended kin are even higher . The traditional (ideal) Chinese partrilineal kinship ties have decreased while the actual extended kinship behaviors have increased. When transportation

and communication encourage more economic involvement in urban areas, contacts with kins have also changed from fixed and formal obligation to bilateral, voluntary choice for leisure and social support purposes.

A society based on sophisticated technologies will tend to legitimate the product of knowledge and extraordinary performance (Winner, 1979). That means new form of expertise and accomplishment is imposed on activities and social relations. This is very different from the Confucius teaching of Chinese families ethics that prescribe proper hierarchical relationships among family roles. Harmony of the Chinese family is traditionally ensured by honoring these principles. Yang (in Wang, 1994) was convinced that technology eventually causes three types of alienation. They are alienation between (1) man and himself, (2) man and others, and (3) man and the nature. A society used to obey the nature is now attempting to challenge and dominate the nature. Cultural and social alienation may transform the world view from what was collectivist to individualistic. Competitiveness, distrust, anxiety of the individuals may all contribute to disequlibrium of family relationships. Traditional Taiwan Chinese concepts of power and authority--tradition, religion, natural law are inevitably yielding to the new mode of legitimization. Technological modifications could lead to the entire remaking of Taiwan Chinese family life's framework which may begin with these conflicts but better along with the coping with them.

Implications in Counseling Taiwan Chinese Families

In preparing this article, the author encountered many writings promoting technological competitiveness and scientific excellence in education but none in questioning adequacy of technological applications or cultivating the thoughts of

appropriate technology in modern families. Nevertheless, counselors who are aware of both the promises and limitations of technology can develop better insights and strategies dealing with families which experience unprepared, unpredicted or unwanted changes due to cultural transition and technological advance.

In a time when technological impact seems to be everywhere within human reach, counselors dealing with families in conflicts play an instrumental role in raising consciousness of the pervasive ignorance of the changing life styles among family members. While traditional family values persist to have impact on Taiwan Chinese, modern technology and its seemingly infinite possibilities of achievement can become a license to forget. Counselors, thus, may need to challenge the discrepancy between the deep rooted Confucius family orientation and the new form of power and authority of individuals in the family modified by technological advances. For those families which are dictated by inappropriate technological uses, counselors must first confront the issues of psychological and mental habits as indications overdependency and irresponsibility. Counselors then can facilitate the retaining of the best family belifes, as well as reconstruction of ethics and rearrangements of family relationships. In this sense, the social constructivist approach in counseling (Ivey, Ivey, and Simek-Morgan, 1997), which simultaneously stresses the social/cultural meaning of the situation and problem solving accompanied by reconstructed understanding and pragmatic action, appears appropriate working with Taiwan Chinese families.

Counselors need not stay passive only to remediate for negative technological impacts on Taiwan Chinese families. They can adopt the educative approach, already familiar to Taiwan Chinese culture, in bridging the scientific and

humanistic aspects of modern family living. One example is to advocate for critical thinking and self evaluation skills of individuals facing multiple options availed by technology. Although assess to technology and information becomes easier, technology can not replace the importance of learning the basic skills and personal and professional ethics. Counselors can therefore become active agents participating in the extraperonsal efforts to promote for rehumanization of modern technological applications and conservation of environment and nature. Furthermore, counselors may join/initiate interdisciplinary net work for structural changes. Practical suggestions by technological educators include (1) supplying families with appropriate knowledge to minimize the technological harm though family education programs, (2) maximizing technological literacy through general education in college and extended education for adults like homemakers, and (3) making policies for the technological service delivery systems to meet the needs of society yet protect equity and rights of consumers.